

**SOLIHULL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CENTRE**

**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2019 AT  
THE STRATFORD UPON AVON CAMPUS**

**PRESENT:**

|                             |                                    |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| John Bolt (Chair)           | Barbara Hughes                     |
| Paul Assinder               | Angharad James (Student Governor)  |
| Stan Baldwin                | Pat Knauff                         |
| Peter Bebbington (External) | Paul Large                         |
| John Callaghan (Principal)  | Geraldine Swanton                  |
| Stevie Gray                 | Sally Tomlinson                    |
| Mark Hayes (Staff Governor) | Matthew Warburton (Staff Governor) |

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Lindsey Stewart (Deputy Principal)  
Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)  
Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services)  
Beth Selwood (Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality)  
Theresa Lynch (Clerk to the Corporation)

Sue McGregor – Dean of Higher Education and Curriculum Innovation (Item 12)

Rosa Wells – Director of Employment and Skills (Item 4 and Item 7)

*The Chair welcomed Peter Bebbington to his first Corporation meeting and Dr Bebbington introduced himself.*

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Badri Gargeshnari, Tyreece James (Student Governor), Lucy Lee and Sukhy Nijjar.

**2. Declarations of Interest in relation to the Agenda**

There were no new declarations of interests.

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019 and matters arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019 were agreed as a true and accurate record, subject to a minor amendment and would be signed by the Chair.

**3.1 Tuition Fee Update**

The Vice Principal Finance explained that the policy documents had been revisited regarding arrangements for cancelling a course and that HE fees had been amended for 2020/21.

Q. Could the Augar Review affect the level of fees?

A. The Augar Review was due out soon, but was unlikely to have a big impact. Any subsequent issues would be considered when the Review was published.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Tuition Fee Policies.

#### 4. Institute of Technology Update

The Director of Employment and Skills presented the report and explained that the IOT bid had been successful at the pre-award stage and the project group had had a meeting with the DfE to obtain feedback. The DfE provided feedback regarding the financial model proposed and the capital plans. It was hoped that the project would be approved by the Corporation and signed off by the DfE by 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019. There were a series of legal documents required to be drawn up in consultation with the partners, including licence, capital funding agreement and a commercial agreement. Eversheds were providing advice in relation to the production of the Heads of Terms and collaboration agreement and for the establishment of a company limited by guarantee. KPIs would need to be agreed and other possible issues were being explored, eg TUPE requirements, salary and annual payments by each of the core partners (Aston University, BCU and SCC), as well as arrangements for in-kind contributions by the additional partners (UCB, UOB and BMet).

It was noted the Birmingham and Solihull LEP had indicated an interest in providing funding of £1m to update digital infrastructure so that partners could access equipment in the hub remotely.

The Principal confirmed that the Project Board had agreed that the Director of Employment and Skills would continue to lead the project.

Q. Is Brexit likely to have any impact on DfE funding the capital investment?

A. The DfE was very keen to get the IOTs started and ensure a successful outcome for this government policy, so it was unlikely that funding would be withdrawn. They had confirmed that payment would be on-profile, so this suggests that they are keen to start investment.

Q. What are the net benefits to the College – would the College have achieved this level of recruitment anyway?

A. Additional recruitment levels have been very cautious and some current student numbers may be assigned to the IOT, but it is planned that it will present a new market and grow provision across the sector. It provides a prominent platform for FE in Birmingham, alongside the HE institutions and provides a manufacturing point of contact for employers. There will be a great resource in-hub with state-of-the-art equipment available to students at each partner institution. Staffing one central hub will also reduce costs and recruitment issues, particularly with regard to specialist posts. Further, there will be coherent vocational progression routes, alongside academic progression routes.

Q. Are the numbers stated feasible?

A. Yes, the planned numbers are realistic and have been developed in consultation with partners to ensure a consistent approach. In terms of risk the numbers can be met through existing learners if necessary. The main purpose of the project will be to really benefit the region and employers, but growth in student numbers is also anticipated.

Q. Will credit transfer be possible between partners?

A. The Project Board has considered this and it may be possible in terms of short courses initially, but it is hoped that longer term it will be possible to transfer module credit etc.

#### 5. Impact of Combined Authority, Devolution and HS2

The Principal gave a presentation relating to regional developments and their impact on the College.

Discussion took place regarding the West Midlands Combined Authority and proposals regarding the adult budget, allocated via the WMCA. It was noted that the allocation for Stratford upon Avon College would be allocated separately via the ESFA. The WMCA was keen to have responsibility for unspent levy too – currently only 21% of the adult levy had been spent. The College has a good relationship with the WMCA.

Levels of sub-contracting were discussed and it was noted that it was planned to reduce the amount of sub-contracting, although it would need to be carefully monitored to determine the appropriate amount during the year.

Q. How much effect will the mayoral election have?

A. Devolution has cross-party support, so apart from the potential change of focus for some projects, it was unlikely to have a large effect.

Q. Is the adult budget likely to remain at the same level?

A. Yes, it was anticipated that it would remain in the region of £122m.

Q. Is funding likely to be directed more towards private providers?

A. A lot of colleges are struggling to use their AEB allocation. Some large colleges from outside the region were sub-contracting in the West Midlands, but this will not be possible in future.

Q. Will the changes have an impact on administrative costs?

A. Yes, there will be increased administrative tasks determining which body funds which students and to monitor that, targets are being hit for each budget specifically. There had also been an indication that records may be required in addition to ILR information.

Discussion took place regarding progression of HS2 and it was noted that a lot of work had already taken place and the project had strong support. Potential economic benefits for Birmingham were extensive. The next phase of the project would be approved by December 2019.

## 6. **Draft Strategic Plan 2019-21 and Annual Priorities 2019/20**

The Principal presented the Strategic Plan for 2019-21 and the Annual Priorities for 2019/20 and explained that they had been discussed with senior managers. Suggested changes were identified in red.

The following amendments/additions were suggested:

- Adult provision to be added to pages 6 and 7, with targets identified;
- Introduction by the Principal;
- Timelines;
- Contents Page;
- How the Plan and Annual Priorities would be measured;
- Summary with key messages for stakeholders and employers;
- Clarity regarding the CWLEP and potential opportunities.

Q. How will the Plan be shared with staff?

A. Once approved, the Plan would be cascaded via managers to all staff, put on the College website and emailed to all staff.

Q. Are there strategic objectives?

A. The annual priorities are the objectives and are measured annually.

It was noted that any further comments should be submitted to the Clerk, prior to final approval of the Plan and Priorities at the July 2019 Corporation meeting.

## 7. Apprenticeship Update 2018/19

The Director of Employment and Skills presented the report and confirmed good long-term relationships with employers, as well as some good new contacts with large employers in the region. Tendering for apprenticeship provision was becoming more common and the College was engaged in monitoring developments regarding standards.

It was noted that there had been funding changes in relation to the small employer contribution that went down to 5% (from 10%) in April 2019.

Discussion took place regarding the Register of Approved Training Providers and the requirement to re-submit an application by the end of June 2019. Due to some issues in the sector, quality assurance standards were being strengthened.

It was noted that discussions were still ongoing with the ESFA regarding the College's non-levy allocation and that updates would be provided, as appropriate.

Q. Will the College achieve the target for recruitment and income?

A. Yes, the outturn target will be achieved, although will not achieve the ambitious target stated in the budget. Recruitment and income levels are similar to 2017/18.

Clarity was sought regarding the design of programmes given that most of the apprentices were in full-time employment. It was noted that there were a range of delivery models, including day release, block release, support in the workplace and blended delivery models. The model depended on the employment sector. The current challenge was the requirement for all apprentices to have 20% off-the-job training. It was confirmed that some tutors do deliver at employer premises, where groups of staff were receiving training.

Q. How will apprenticeship provision at Stratford upon Avon be improved?

A. The focus has been on the Ofsted visit, but a number of improvements have already been made with regard to tracking apprenticeships and there is much more control through MOT meetings, when all student progress is reviewed.

## 8. Sub-contracting Report

The Deputy Principal presented the report and explained that there were 2 elements for sub-contracting based on WMCA or ESFA funding and that it would be necessary to monitor the area carefully to ensure targets are met for each.

An update on Phoenix Ltd was provided – Ofsted would be carrying out a monitoring visiting in October 2019 and this would provide detail relating to quality. In preparation for the visit, Phoenix staff would be joining the College's CPD event in June 2019.

**RESOLVED** to approve the OJEU Light Touch Framework Tender for a fixed term period of August 2019 to 31 July 2020, to deliver between £500k and £1.2m of AEB programmes.

## 9. Property Update Report

### 9.1 Property Update

The Vice Principal Finance provided an update relating to property matters.

JRD  
Initials

It was noted that the completion of the sale of the Simon Digby land had now taken place. The Stratford upon Avon campus re-development was underway and the Project Team had been appointed. The project manager's initial report had been included with the report, for information.

Discussion took place regarding the initial exploration regarding sale of the front car park at the Stratford upon Avon campus. A range of proposals had been established and it would now be useful to advertise the site to establish interest. The Vice Principal Finance explained that when Tudor Grange House had been put up for sale a detailed matrix had been produced to clarify the basis for sale, which included broader considerations than just financial value. It was agreed that surveyors be appointed to undertake the market scan to ascertain interest and genuine proposals for disposal of the car park or part therein.

It was noted that Octopus Healthcare Ltd had now sold TGH to the Macc Group. The College's overage payments were protected. It was confirmed that the College would work with the new owners to ensure that the same kind of relationship and arrangements were in place as had been negotiated with Octopus.

## 9.2 Sanctuary Housing

*Barbara Hughes left the meeting during consideration of this item.*

*Minutes are held separately.*

## 10. Business Travel, Expenses and Benefits Policy and Procedures

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and explained that clarity was provided regarding staff declarations in relation to having insurance, MOT and licence when making mileage claims and with regard to the cycle-to-work scheme.

It was noted that this Policy was part of the collective agreement. Verbal agreement had been received from the unions regarding its content,

Q. Do we keep copies of individual staff insurance and other evidence?

A. No, the administrative costs of collecting would be onerous, hence the need for staff to sign the declaration.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Business Travel, Expenses and Benefits Policy and Procedures, subject to confirmation of union agreement.

## 11. Human Resources Policies

### 11.1 Maternity Policy

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the policy and explained that it combined the Stratford upon Avon College and Solihull College policies, and that it reflected statutory requirements.

Q. Is there a policy for students that become pregnant during their programme of study?

A. The approach for students would be mainly based on the Equality Act, but it may be useful to clarify the position with regards to bursaries for example. It was noted that Stratford upon Avon College may have had a policy for this. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services would discuss this with his team and consider whether a

policy would be required for students. **ACTION.**

**RESOLVED** to approve the Maternity Policy, subject to confirmation of union agreement.

### **11.2 Framework & Procedure for Terminating Contracts of Employment by Agreement**

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the framework and procedure and explained that in response to the AOC Senior Staff Remuneration Code an appendix had been added regarding severance arrangements for Senior Postholders.

Discussion took place regarding tax implications for enhanced payments and confidentiality agreements.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Framework & Procedure for Terminating Contracts of Employment by Agreement.

## **12. Higher Education Update**

The Dean of Higher Education and Curriculum Innovation presented the report and explained that the Augar Review report was due to be published, but as a result of the backlash by universities to some of its potential recommendations, it was unlikely to have as big an impact as previously expected.

Planned curriculum development areas were presented.

Discussion took place regarding Degree Awarding Powers and the application process, including the required clarity regarding the OfS's definition of 'exceptional cases'.

It was noted that an HE Governors' Expert group would take place on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019 to consider the Access and Participation Plan for 2020/21 that would need to be submitted by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019. **ACTION.**

Q. Although HE remains a strong area, numbers do seem to have reduced – is this the case?

A. Higher level apprenticeships has had an impact on HE numbers and franchise numbers have reduced a little.

Q. How does HE look 3 years hence?

A. The environment is changing a lot and it is difficult to know how things will be in 3 years, but applications are down for 2019/20 and more students are struggling with mental health and other issues.

Q. What is the biggest problem facing the College with regard to HE?

A. Competition from institutions that are attracting students with unconditional offers and financial incentives. Some schools don't work with the College. Recruiting adults and progression from access courses is strong as is recruitment for part time courses.

Q. Does the College work with the OU?

A. The College has worked with the OU in the past and would be happy to welcome exploration of partnerships, as appropriate.

## **13. Learner Voice End of Year Report 2018/19**

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the report and explained that

it provided a summary of learner voice activity throughout the year. Further information about surveys would be made available to Governors in July 2019. **ACTION.**

It was noted that the appointment of the President role for the Student Executive Committee would be taking place shortly and that the Women's Officer who had presented to Governors at the last meeting was interested in the role. It was also noted that Barbara Hughes was the Corporation's representative on the College's Learner Voice Steering Group.

#### 14. **National Achievement Rate Tables (NART) Data**

The Deputy Principal presented the NART data and explained that RCU MIDES Data for 2017/18 presented the College in the top quartile for 16-18 year olds, but that for both 19+ and apprenticeships they were in the lower section of the third quartile. Discussion took place comparing the data between neighbouring colleges. The Principal confirmed that there would be an expert group in the autumn term 2019 to explore the data in more detail. **ACTION.**

It was noted that changes had been made at Stratford upon Avon for apprenticeship delivery to respond to the lower achievement levels. Apprenticeships at Stratford upon Avon had self-assessed as a grade 4.

It was suggested that adult performance by qualification type data be shared with governors at an expert group meeting to demonstrate differences between neighbouring colleges and to be able to compare qualifications offered. It was acknowledged that a significant part of the adult offer was for English and maths and the deep dive analysis would demonstrate this.

#### 15. **Equality Policy**

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the Equality Policy and explained that this provided the statement of intent, whilst the Annual Report showed outcomes and commitment.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Equality Policy.

#### 16. **Freedom of Speech Policy**

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the new Freedom of Speech Policy that had been identified in the recent governance internal audit. To ensure compliance with OfS the Policy was now presented.

It was suggested that the definition of academic freedom, as set out in the Articles of Government be included in the Policy. **ACTION.**

It was noted that the procedure for external room bookings was stated in the External Speaker Policy and it was noted that there would be new guidance published in due course regarding external speaker risks.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Freedom of Speech Policy.

#### 17. **Curriculum Changes 2019/20**

*This item was deemed confidential and staff and student governors left the meeting during the discussion.*

**18. Regular Update Reports**

**18.1 Bids and Projects Report**

The contents of the Bids and Projects Report were received for information.

**18.2 PMR – March 2019**

The contents of the PMR for March 2019 were received for information.

**18.3 Use of the College Seal and Chair's Signature Report**

The contents of the Use of the College Seal and Chair's Signature Report were noted for information.

**18.4 Tender Update Report**

The contents of the Tender Update Report were noted for information and clarity was sought regarding the value of the website tender.

**19. Date of the Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019, starting at 5.30pm, followed by the annual dinner at 7.15pm.

**20. Provisional Dates for 2019/20**

The provisional dates for 2019/20 were discussed and the Clerk confirmed that they would be finalised following any further comments.

*The meeting ended at 8.20pm*

Signed : J. R. Bolt

Date : 3rd July 2019

